

schedules to go to the polls with their children to vote is an important lesson in civic responsibility. By seeing their parents voting, young people understand very clearly the importance of being involved in their community and its decisions.

The efforts of "Extraordinarily Ewing" have been recognized by Ewing Mayor Al Bridges, the Town Council and by County Executive, Robert Prunetti. "Extraordinarily Ewing's" efforts have also been spotlighted by the *Ewing Weekly Times* and *The Trenton Times*.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when voter participation and involvement is on the wane, the efforts of "Extraordinarily Ewing" are a refreshing reminder of the importance of being involved. The efforts of these parents and business people offer a valuable lesson in civic responsibility for all of us.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in recognizing this group and these efforts.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION BENEFIT FOR ALL SENIORS IS URGENTLY NEEDED; GOOD HEALTH CARE REQUIRES ACCESS TO PHARMACEUTICAL TREATMENT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today, Representatives HENRY WAXMAN, JOHN DINGELL, myself and others are introducing the Access to Rx Medications in Medicare Act of 1999. Senators EDWARD KENNEDY (D-Mass.) and JAY ROCKEFELLER (D-W. Va.) are introducing the bill in the Senate. It provides a basic, affordable Part B benefit of \$1,700 per year that will cover 80% of pharmaceutical costs for all seniors and eligible disabled individuals with more than \$200 in annual drug costs. The bill also helps all Medicare beneficiaries by covering 100% of their costs above \$3,000 in annual out-of-pocket prescription drug expenditures.

The benefit is to be administered by private-sector entities such as pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), insurers, or networks or wholesale and retail pharmacies, which would competitively bid for Medicare's business. Entities contracting with HHS to provide the drug benefit would be required to meet certain standards, including establishing an adequate formulary and an exceptions process to the formulary, as well as a 24-hour counseling program for enrollees, an education program for medical providers on appropriate prescribing and dispensation of covered drugs, and drug utilization review.

To stabilize employer-sponsored retiree health coverage, we're proposing to subsidize employer's coverage by paying companies a capitated amount that would otherwise be paid to a private entity—but only if that coverage is at least as good as what Medicare is offering. In return, employers would have to agree to pay the cost of their retirees' Medicare Part B prescription drug premium for at least a year.

Clearly, adding a prescription drug benefit to Medicare is not an inexpensive proposition. But the price of leaving pharmaceutical medications out of the programs' benefits package and instead paying for unnecessary hospitalizations for those who just 'try to do without' is also high. The Food and Drug Adminis-

tration estimated that the cost of hospitalizations caused by inappropriate use of prescription medicines was \$20 billion annually higher in 1995.

There are several financing options that I hope will be considered as the Medicare prescription drug debate advances. One is to assess tobacco companies for what they cost the program to treat smoke-related illnesses. A second is to support a strategy of recouping Medicare expenditures on tobacco-related diseases through suits against Big Tobacco. A third is to consider dedicating a portion of projected budgetary surpluses to paying for Medicare drug coverage.

Debate about the financing options for a Medicare drug benefit will inevitably be contentious. But there is no better time to join this debate than today—when the program's solvency has been extended until 2015 even without an infusion of money from budgetary surpluses. With an infusion, the solvency timeline stretches far into the future—until 2027.

It is time to turn our attention to meeting the needs of the growing number of senior citizens who are being rapidly priced out of drug coverage. Adding a prescription drug benefit is an investment—one of the most important we can make—in the health of tens of millions of our citizens.

I recently sent out a survey to seniors in my district to assess the prices they pay for a range of specific prescription medications. Their responses were both revealing and sad. Asked what percentage of her monthly \$547 income is dedicated to prescription drugs, one elderly woman suffering from osteoporosis replied very simply: "I cannot afford them." Queried about how this makes her feel, she said: "I just try to cope."

Another of my constituents, who has asthma, wrote: "During the winter and spring my asthma is particularly bad and I have to use my inhaler quite often; and I sometimes am not able to purchase another, and I limit my use." Asked whether she has ever had to choose between paying for items like food or electricity because of the high cost of prescription drugs, she said: "Yes, and I felt frightened."

People who are sick need pharmaceutical treatment. Many who aren't take pharmaceuticals to stave off illness. In my case, taking Zocor lowers my blood cholesterol and helps reduce my risk of winding up in the hospital for costly bypass surgery.

There are millions more elderly Americans with similar stories in congressional districts across the country. There are people who suffer from lack of medically appropriate access to pharmaceutical treatment.

I submit that for a health plan in the year 2000 not to offer pharmaceutical care is preposterous.

In today's era of unprecedented prosperity, who would say "No" to legislation providing prescription drug coverage to the one group that would benefit most—our nation's seniors?

In the 105th Congress, we invested in children's health when we enacted the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Now we must fix the huge hole in Medicare's benefit package. If we don't a bolder future Congress will.

TRIBUTE TO HARRISON COBB

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, few people I know have committed as much intellectual attention to the topic of natural resources as my long-time friend and constituent, Mr. Harrison Cobb, of Fort Collins, Colorado. My first acquaintance with Mr. Cobb was made in 1987. He invited me into his home and spent generous time allowing me the benefit of his vast education, experience, and passion for mining.

Supremely dedicated to preserving the environmental integrity of America's western heritage, Mr. Cobb's civic devotion is to influence public debate about natural resources issues with balanced opinion employing practical, logical, and scientific reason, and historical perspective. His persuasive treatment of natural resource questions is unmatched. Mr. Cobb is, in my opinion, a giant among his colleagues in the field of mineral extraction.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Cobb's contributions are bigger still in scope. His professional talents have been directed toward many of the broader topics confronting all Americans: Economics, national character, education, and cultural decay are issues about which Mr. Cobb has engaged his countrymen and to which he has held many public officials accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the example of Mr. Cobb to my colleagues in the House, and hereby submit to the RECORD for their consideration some thoughts of Mr. Cobb's conveyed in a letter he recently posted to me.

HARRISON S. COBB,
Ft. Collins, CO.

The world's most important commodity, after air and water, is ROCK. Everything that we use, need and want comes out of rock. Even food, clothing and housing are taken from soil, which is disintegrated rock.

To get the autos, aeroplanes, trains, toothpaste fluoride, catalytic convertors, printing presses, electric power, running tap water and almost everything else out of the solid rock, it HAS to be mined. Thus far there's no other way to produce it.

The primary purposes of mountains are not skiing, hiking or viewing. Mountains are the only places where you can walk directly into the inside of the earth and look for those things so necessary to our lives. There may be equally rich sources of gold, copper, iron, platinum, fluorite, tungsten, molybdenum under the Kansas-Nebraska prairie, but who can sink through 2000 feet of sedimentary rock in order to start prospecting for them?

Here and there natural forces have squeezed the somewhat plastic inside of the earth up through cracks in the sedimentaries, forming protuberances that we call mountains, giving us our only opportunities to see and search for those minerals that occur only inside the earth. This is the primary purpose of and use for mountains.

The enviros and the bureaucratic Lilliputians who aim to end mining through over-regulation, land withdrawals, Kyoto treaties and UN heritage sites demonstrate lack of education and complete ignorance of fact. In the end, the people will suffer—but who cares about that?

CONGRESSMAN BOB: This is just to add to your ammunition. Thanks for good work.

HARRISON.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to Mr. Cobb for his love of our mighty nation, for his consistent